The older women informants described, when they were young, they would work at scraping skins pegged to the ground, by leaning over from the waist, feet well apart and knees unbent, swinging sideways from the hips. They could keep up this rhythmical steady motion, with the short-handled scraper usually tipped with metal, for hours at a time, one day after another. Sometimes, too, a woman would spend a whole day softening ropes of rawhide by rubbing the rope which had been run through the eye and ear apertures of a buffalo skull upon which the horns had been left so that she, sitting on the ground with legs extended, could rest her feet against the horns as she pulled the rope back and forth, making it soft and white.[4] Nevertheless the tedium of these operations was often relieved by the fact that occasionally other women, who had at the moment some leisure, would hear the work going on and would volunteer to help.

It was customary for women to do much of their work in groups. If a young woman, for instance, wished to make a fine robe, she would call in some other women, including an older experienced "hand." The latter would mark the robe where the embroidery should go, and the younger women did the fancy work. The hostess would cook for all present and so, in a pleasant atmosphere of sociability and "woman talk," the work would progress. A similar type of gathering would be held when a sufficient number of hides had been saved to make a lodge cover.

In size the lodges ranged from six skins up to twenty-four or twenty-five, with the average of about fourteen to seventeen.[5] Much skill was needed for cutting and fitting the skins and an experienced woman would be called in to do that part, while the others helped with the task of sewing the skins together. Our informants stated that a woman would have to "save and save" skins towards a new lodge, which was a necessity about every three years.

Women went out in groups to pick berries and wild fruits as well as to dig roots, but each one had right of disposal over what

[4] Another method for softening ropes is given by Kroeber, 1908, p. 150.

[5] The largest lodge remembered by the Gros Ventres is said to have been that of the Blood Chief, Father of All, who had, at the time of the 1855 treaty, a lodge with two fires, poles 65 ft. long, and the cover consisting of more than 25 skins.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

778 base, and 2½ inches in depth from top to bottom. The stem is
276 roundish in section, about 1½ inches in diameter at the distal end, tapering slightly to about 1⅛ toward the proximal. The stem is "humped a bit toward the middle," with a ring carved all round to which is attached a small tasseled string ornament believed to represent the hair rope with which He-who-starved-to-death snared the Red Bird. (For story see No. 5 in Appendix.) The
[283] Gros Ventre women used to make an adornment from "a growth looking like hair" which they gathered from the water and twisted into a strong thread, and The Boy thinks that this tasseled ornament on the Pipe is of the same material.

There is another ring carved around and the proximal end of the Pipe is carved in the shape of a "duck" head. Into the "duck's" bill is fitted a small stem,—about 1⅛ inches long and ¼ inch in diameter, projecting about ½ inch beyond the tip of the bill, encased in copper,—from which the Pipe was smoked.[6]

[532]

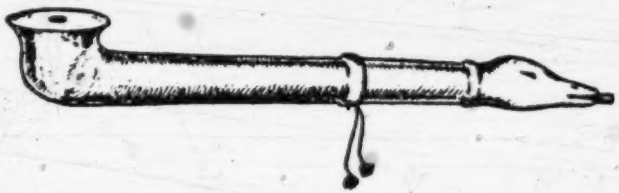

FIGURE 1. THE FLAT PIPE.

The whole Pipe is enclosed in its own numerous wrappings which form a separate case with its own three thong ties within the larger Pipe bundle. No one, it may be added, seems to know how the Flat Pipe got its name; there is nothing markedly "flat" about it, except the somewhat squat bowl.

778 The whole Pipe bundle contains many other sacred objects

[6] Kroeber, 1908, p. 272, gives a description of the Flat Pipe as being made of catlinite with the bowl in the shape of a person. Actually this sounds more like one of the objects in the Feathered Pipe bundle,—the so-called Image or Human Face. See p. 142. Kroeber's mention of a string around the center of the stem of the Flat Pipe, however, matches the description given us. [R.F.]

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

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he came out of the cave. As soon as the mother saw Blood-Clot she took wing and sailed into the air. There was a blinding flash of lightning and this was the last thing that Blood-Clot remembered. When he came to he found himself at the base of the mountain with his hair all singed up. He then collected himself and went back up to the top of the mountain. All this,—the flash of lightning, the becoming unconscious, finding himself at the base of the mountain, climbing it again,—took place four different times. The last time that Blood-Clot climbed the mountain he twisted the beaks of the young birds and taunted them with the words: "Tell your mother about this."

The next time, however, a big, black cloud appeared and came to the mountain. The father of the birds came. So soon as the father saw Blood-Clot there was a flash of lightning but after it Blood-Clot still stood there and said to the father: "You can't do anything with me. You can't kill me. You better leave me alone. It is useless for you to shoot at me. I will show you how powerful I am."

So Blood-Clot took an arrow and mounted if and shot at a big, flat stone on top of the mountain. The arrow pierced the stone and was buried in it, all but a bit of it that stuck out. "Look at that arrow there," said Blood-Clot to the father bird. "If you can pull it out from that rock then you can do something to me that will harm me. If you can't pull it out then it is useless for you, as I told you, to try to harm me." "All right," said the father. "I can do that. That is easy." So the bird sailed up in the air. As he did so, a flash of lightning struck at this rock. Then he tried to get hold of the arrow and pull it out. He took hold and flew up to pull it out and the arrow stretched and as it contracted it pulled the bird back as the father was caught fast by it.[*] Blood-Clot saw that the bills and feet of the father thunderbird and the other thunderbirds were of buffalo neck tendon. Thus Blood-Clot trapped the father. But he released the father saying to him: "Here is how powerful I am." And with that he pulled the arrow out with ease. Then he said to the bird: "Leave me alone. You can't do anything with me."

After that he came down from the mountain, went back home and told his wives what had happened. "No wonder," he said, "your father kills off the young men as he does. Tell your father that those birds up there could not do anything with me. You probably heard the thunder and lightning and disturbance up there while I was away. The birds were trying to kill me but they did not succeed." The girls then went back and told their father.

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[*] Blood-Clot's arrow, The Boy explained, was made of buffalo tendon from the upper neck of the animal—the tendon that holds the neck to the body. This is very tough and stretches like rubber when it is taken out. This tendon had many uses, for instance, for mending the broken handle of a knife. When it was wrapped around anything it was stretched as much as possible and when it dried it held very tightly. The travois basket was tied on with the same tendon.